A

MEMORIAL

OF

Mrs. Julia J. Keys,

WIFE OF DAVID A. KEYS,

AND

DAUGHTER OF SALMON GRIDLEY,

WHO WAS

BORN IN HARWINTON, CONN.

March 3d, 1815,

AND

Died in Unionville, Connecticut,

February 1st, 1855,

Aged 39 Years and 11 Months.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

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NOTE.

These pages are printed for the satisfaction of numerous relatives of the deceased, who were unable to be present at her funeral.

It is also the wish of her husband that his children may have such a memorial of their departed mother.

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SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

Funeral of Mrs. Keys,

On the Sabbath, Feb. 4th, 1855,

BY HER PASTOR,

REV. G. M. PORTER.

Ps. CII, 24:—I said, Oh my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.

This language is expressive of great confidence in God, of affectionate dependence upon Him, and at the same time is the utterance of a very natural desire, not to be removed from this world in middle life.

And in fact there are reasons which render death in the midst of one's days peculiarly undesirable.

That the old, whose vital energies are decaying, whose season for earthly usefulness and enjoyment is mostly past, should die, seems an event more natural and less to be dreaded. That the infant and youth should die may seem untimely, yet have they not lived long enough to form those connexions in life, the breaking of which would cause their removal to be most widely and seriously felt.

But to be taken away in the midst of one's days, is an event which is apt to carry with it a varied and wide spread grief.

Death at this time of life is peculiarly undesirable, because mankind are then in the maturity of bodily strength. There is no nobler specimen of God's material creation, than the human body. It is indeed the very flower of his visible works. By slow degrees it grows from the helplessness and immaturity of infancy to the full strength and compactness of manhood. Often in the

maturity of life there comes a season when the health is firmer, the spirits more uniform, the physical enjoyment greater than even in youth. In such a state the body may continue for a number of years, until at length, it inclines by more or less rapid degrees to decay. That it should be cut down in its prime, like a flourishing and beautiful tree, severed from its root and prostrated upon the earth, that a work so curiously framed as the link between man and the earth, should be destroyed in the very perfection of its vigor and beauty, seems indeed to the feeble vision of man, a melancholy and mysterious event of Divine Providence.

But this is not the only nor the principal fact connected with death at such a period of life, which causes the understanding of man to bow as before an unexplained mystery. Curious and noble as it may seem in itself, the human form is of chief value only as it constitutes the organ of the ra-

tional soul. It is to look only with the eye of sense and not with the eye of reason, to regard man as a mere cunning image of clay. That once loved form which now employs each mournful thought, and attracts to itself the last tribute of respect and affection, is thus precious and dear, as the late tenement of a soul which, however allied in its obscure instincts and lower faculties to the spirit of the brute, is yet infinitely exalted *in kind* above the brute, as it is endowed with the sacred gift of reason, has been visited with a portion of God's own pure and holy light, and sustains sublime and imperishable relations to the invisible author of its own invisible being.

Not only then the structure of the body but the connexion with it of the rational soul, makes the former the object of sacred regard and sympathy. Distinct in their existence, nature, and life, as the soul and the body are, yet by that mysterious connexion which the Creator has established between

them, they are by slow degrees developed in connection with each other until they reach their earthly maturity.

And how large a portion of the first part of human life seems to be spent in acquiring the intelligence, the practical wisdom and experience and judgment, the wise self-restraint, the care and watchfulness, by which we may be enabled to act our part even tolerably in the remainder of life.

To be withdrawn from life just when knowledge, judgment and experience, are at the ripest, and best fitted to work, and to leave behind them good and lasting results, seems, so far as this world is concerned, to make the previous preparation for life in a great measure vain. The tree is cut down just as its fruit is ripening. Life is continued just long enough to gain the discipline preparatory to the largest usefulness, but not long enough to make that preparation available for the best results.

Through a long and tedious preparatory course the season of maturity is reached, only that one may look out upon the field of labor for which he has been preparing, and then close his eyes on it forever.

Such an event becomes to our view peculiarly mysterious, when we regard those natural connexions in life, which seem to render the presence of the middle-aged indispensable. "None of us liveth to himself." We are bound to each other in the way of influence, dependence and support. But in the midst of our days, the ties which bind us seem most numerous, and most painful to be broken.

They reach out both to those who precede and to those who are coming after us, on life's way. Those who have watched over our own infancy and childhood in their turn look to us, to sustain and cheer them in their declining years, while on the other hand, those who follow after are still needing watchful sustenance and guidance.

Standing mid-way on life's journey in the full strength of years, we stretch out one arm to those whose decaying vigor calls for support and cheer, another to those whose feebleness and immaturity ask loudly to be cherished by human aid. True as this is of all who are at the middle time of life, as all such may feel who are not wholly bound up in themselves, it is especially true of those who have on the one hand an aged parent, and on the other a family of dependent children bound to them by strong and tender affection and dependence for sympathy, care and nurture. The aged parent naturally looks to his now middle-aged children, as his best earthly solace and cheer under increasing infirmities. While the immature children, what can they do without the wisdom and support of their parent.

Thus from both directions in life do the aged and the young look to the middle-aged, especially to the middle-aged parent or son

or daughter. How wide and destructive the breach, when such supports are taken away.

But it is by no means the young and the old who feel an irrepareable loss, when one is cut off in the midst of his days. Friends, co-equals in age, partners in the labors and the struggles of life, endeared by a common experience, common objects of pursuit and affection are never separated at a time when human friendship seems more indispensable, than in middle life. Never so truly as then do we feel the real value of earthly friendships, and earthly friends. The attachments of this season of our earthly life may seem tame and sober in comparison with the fervor of youthful friendships. But for real strength and value, nothing of an earthly nature can minister such solace and support as the tried and faithful friendships of maturer life. When men have reached the age of forty years, they have had experience enough of life and its objects of pursuit to enable them to see that nothing of

an earthly nature is so valuable as tried and faithful friends. They have arrived at a period when they are less inclined to wander, have acquired their business, and their dwellings, their families and their social friends, with whom they hope to gain their highest earthly enjoyment. And as, in the exercise of that reflection which one must be a strange being not to exercise by this time of life, one looks upon the changeful nature of earthly objects, he sees *one* which can be transferred from this to the eternal state, and that is the society of friends. This thought gives to the beloved friends of earth a peculiar hold upon the heart. The experienced insufficiency and vanity of all other earthly good leads us to grapple our friends, especially if we may view them as friends in Christ more firmly than ever to our hearts. They seem indeed our best and truest earthly portion, which may all the more rationally and purely be loved, because they are to constitute no mean part of our eternal portion.

That friends should be taken from us when we most feel their value, and are looking to their society and sympathy as our chief earthly solace, especially if they are friends who shine upon us with a portion of Christ's heavenly light, is indeed a bereavement. Whether it be their lot to be taken from us, or ours to be taken from them, by death, at a time when the solid fruits of one of the richest blessings of man, here or hereafter, are being enjoyed, the separation seems indeed lamentable.

And, if this be true of other friendships, it is emphatically true of that connexion which God has meant to be in some respects the strongest of all earthly friendships, by which the husband and the wife are bound to each other.

That the betrothed should be torn by death from the heart of her youthful lover, that the bride in the bloom of youth should be snatched away or should fade away from the arms of her newly married husband,

are events that carry with them a sharp anguish, and excite the universal sympathy of mankind.

Yet what are these events, to the removal of the tried and faithful, the warm hearted and devoted companion of years, endeared by a thousand acts of kindness and assistance, endeared only the more, by a joint participation, in whatever of labor or sorrow may have been their lot in the former years of their earthly pilgrimage. That the husband and wife should have struggled on together through the early years of married life to that period, when the value of their mutual friendship becomes the greatest, the need of their united labors and cares for their family becomes the sorest, while the prospect of a season of tranquil enjoyment in their own and the society of their children is opening,—that one or the other should be taken away in the midst of their days seems to human view inexplicable.

Such an event becomes all the more afflicting if the person thus taken away bears from this world the heart of a christian. This fact renders the presence of the departed all the more desirable. The christian faith sheds a hallowed grace over all that belongs to man and his connexions in life. It makes a far more elevated and manly mind and character, purer and warmer affections, a more affectionate and faithful child, parent, husband, wife, and friend. Even the human body acquires a new significance and grandeur, if it may be regarded as a temple of the Holy Ghost, by whose energy it shall be raised to a new and immortal life.

But not only for these reasons, but for the special work resting upon the christian, does his removal in the midst of his days seem undesirable. For then his counsels and instructions will be the most sound and judicious, his example most regarded, his labors most efficient.

How natural that the christian should desire not to be removed from the work which his Master has given him to do until he may have the consciousness of having in a good degree, performed it. As he sees how much is to be done to redeem this world to Christ, he feels that so far as he can judge, it is a thing by no means to be desired that God should take him away in the midst of his days.

And if all these considerations concur in making death at middle age undesirable, they render the thought of sudden death at that age still more repulsive. To die without a moment's warning, to have all earthly ties broken in an instant, without the expectation, or even the knowledge of friends, to die without one farewell word or look, or pressure of the hand, as it is a trial to which comparatively few are called, is also one from which the soul of man naturally recoils with dread.

And yet, my friends it is just such an event, with all those afflicting circumstances to which I have alluded, which has called us to mingle with the worship of God to-day, the tears of lamentation and grief.

One taken away by God in the midst of her days, in the maturity of womanly vigor and beauty, in the full strength of understanding, and of ripe experience and established character, with a heart beating quickly and earnestly for a numerous circle of relatives and friends, the last Sabbath with us worshipping as we trust in spirit and in truth, is to-day laid before us prostrated by sudden death.

How wonderful the change! How swift the destruction of earthly hopes!

Ah! it is the long tried faithful wife taken from the arm of her husband, no more to walk by his side, his friend and counsellor. The face which "always welcomed him with a smile" is fixed in death.

The hand that moved with rare self-denial, the heart that beat with strong attachment and devotion, are forever still.

Ah! it is the mother snatched as in a moment out of the midst of the flock of children which she bore to him, and with a mother's love saw grow on her faithful breast.

'The tender bands of the house are forever loosed. For she who was the mother of the house now inhabits the land of spirits. Her faithful activity has ceased. Her ordering judgement provides, her anxiety watches no more.' And this company of children must be henceforth *motherless* on life's way.

It is the dearly loved daughter too, removed from the side of a father who had seen friend after friend depart, and leaned strongly on her for comfort.

It is the sister who kept bright the links of early familiarity and love.

It is the frank, cordial, whole-souled friend taken from a wide and sorrowing circle.

It is the christian woman whose designs uniformly and earnestly expressed were for the spiritual good of her family, whose counsels and instructions will no more guide her little flock in ways of righteousness and safety.

In the midst of her days, surrounded by all that could make life sweet, with no farewell word or look to husband or children, father, sisters, brother, friends, cut off from life and consigned to the grave.

And is this all that we may say? Is it a grim iron hand that, moved as by some mighty mechanism, reaches out of the darkness, and in a moment grasps and bears away the beloved one, leaving survivors to gaze after in dumb horror?

No, indeed, it is a warm and living hand, human at once and Divine, that holds the keys of the unseen world and of death.

It is a pierced hand "nailed once for our advantage to the bitter cross."

"Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

Surely He still bears them on his all-embracing, Divine and human heart.

He, the exalted Head of our humanity, Jesus Christ, bears his sovereign prerogative over all worlds, over life and death, mixed with the condescension and compassion of one meek and lowly of mind. And what words, what thrilling and momentous words are those once spoken by Him on earth, to the sister of the dead Lazarus. "Jesus saith unto her. Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection, at the last day.

Jesus saith unto her. I am the the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Slaves as we are to sense, prone like Martha to attach the chief consequence to this tabernacle of clay, unable to bridge over the passage from this life to the bodily resurrection, inclined like Martha to leave it a dark comfortless void, or else to fill it with dim doubts, or with unhallowed frivolous fancies, what noble and satisfying words spoken thus by Him who is the Word and Wisdom of God. "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." How careless does He seem of all that concerns the body, when He exalts the soul of man, his true and proper self to such dignity in the comparison, as to tell us that he that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.

So little would He teach us that bodily death is to be accounted of, that in fact there is no death to the believer.

So little is that far distant resurrection to which Martha alludes to be dwelt upon, that in fact it is of no account in comparison with that life of blessedness in and through Christ, which shall flow uninterruptedly forever. How noble and cheering too, the declaration of his inspired apostle, that Jesus "hath abolished death, having brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel."

There is no death for the believer. All of fear, of darkness, of doubt, of trying change, that we are accustomed to associate with that term passes away forever to him who can fix his steady faith and love and hope, on the Redeemer.

Here then all is light about that which we call death. It is the birth of the regenerated spirit, the flowing on of that eternal life and blessedness which is begun in it, in perfected union of heart and soul, with its adored Lord.

Be it so then that the believer is cut off in the midst of his days, still we can trust, (can we not?) one so Divine, so compassionate, so wise, so nigh to all the interests of the race, as the Son of God. Yes,

> "Worthy His hand to hold the keys,
> Guided by wisdom and by love."

Submissively do we bow to that sovereign yet compassionate Hand, though it smite to the earth our dearest friends, our fondest hopes.

If he visit us with 'pangs of grief that seem to conquer trust,' still in the helplessness of sorrow we can cast ourselves at the foot of the cross. If nothing more, we can with outstretched hands fall prostrate on 'this great world's altar stairs, that slope through darkness up to God,' until the sweet sense of forgiveness, of resignation, of hope fills our hearts.

We can surrender to His gracious control all those torn and distracted earthly

interests with which He seems to have dealt so rudely, confident in His perfect though unsearchable wisdom.

With submission to His holy will, we can tread onward the path of life, cheerless though it seem, faithfully fulfiling its lowliest duties, and awaiting with trembling hope and joy the turning of the golden key which shall open to us the gates of Paradise, and admit us to an everlasting union with Christ and departed friends in Christ,

"In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain us all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing and singing in their glory move
And wipe the tears forever from our eyes."

In such a trust, not without grief, but with composure, may we take the last look of the loved ones of earth and commit them to the grave.

Unseasonable as their death may seem to our feeble vision, yet it is not so to the eye of the compassionate Lord of the living and the dead.

There is a beauty even in death,—in death in the midst of one's days.

"Behold the bed of death!
This pale and lovely clay!
Heard ye the sob of parting breath?
Marked ye the eye's last ray?
No. Life so sweetly ceased to be
It lapsed in immortality.

Could tears revive the dead
Rivers should swell our eyes.
Could sighs recall the spirits fled,
We would not quench our sighs
Till love relumed this altered mien
And all the embodied soul were seen.

Bury the dead—and weep
In stillness o'er the loss.
Bury the dead,—in Christ they sleep
Who bore on earth His cross,
And from the grave their dust shall rise
In his own image to the skies."

OBITUARY NOTICE.

DIED,

In Unionville, Feb. 1, 1855,

(very unexpectedly,)

Mrs. Julia J. Keys,

WIFE OF DAVID A. KEYS,

AND

DAUGHTER OF SALMON GRIDLEY,

Aged 40 *Years.*

Her death was unusually afflictive. By it a husband has been bereaved, in the midst of his days, of a beloved wife, who "always welcomed him with a smile" and showed a self-denying devotion to his welfare; an affectionate family of seven children have been deprived of a kind and watchful mother, at a time when they seemed most to need her presence; an aged and often bereaved father mourns for a daughter whom he dearly loved, and in whose neighborhood he found peculiar comfort; a family of brothers and sisters have lost a favorite member; a large circle lament the removal of a frank, warm-hearted, esteemed friend; and the Church of Christ sorrows over the departure of a beloved member. The whole community in which she lived strongly sympathize in their bereavement.

ON THE DEATH OF

Mrs. Julia J. Keys.

The tree was in flushing, with promise and blossom,
The tree was in bearing, with beauty and fruit,
And sweet birds of song, 'mid its branches were warbling,
And streams of affection flow'd fresh round its root.

No tempest, nor cloud, the horizon was darkening,
Yet a shaft, like the lightning, in secrecy spread,
The quick, vital tide, at its fount was arrested,
"In the midst of its days," it lay smitten and dead.

Oh! wide was the chasm of this deep desolation,
And bitter their grief, 'neath its shadow that grew,
No more to that shelter with gladness to gather,
Nor drink from its green leaves the crystalline dew.

But a voice, 'mid the weeping, with music descended,
The voice of a Saviour's compassion and love,
"Your tree hath not perished, its date was immortal,
The crown of its joy glows unfading above."

L. H. S.